

Plateau massacre: Military arrests three suspects for killings

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Nigerian soldiers (c)File photo/PUNCH

The Special Military Task Force, code-named Operation Safe Haven, has arrested 17 suspects over the attack on the 11 communities of Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State and a protest that followed.

The spokesperson for the OPSH , Umar Adams, who disclosed this at a press conference in Jos, on Wednesday, said three of the suspects were arrested in connection with the attacks, while 14 others were

nabbed for allegedly blocking federal highways to protest the killings by herdsmen in the state .

He stated that the three suspects, who had not confessed to the crime, were apprehended at Gashish District, Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of the state.

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He said 14 of the suspects were arrested while allegedly causing “civil unrest” by stopping passersby on the highways.

More than 100 persons were killed and about 50 houses torched during the attacks by herdsmen on Xland, Gindin Akwati, Ruku, Ngar, Kura Falls and Kakuruk all in Gashish District.

Adams said, “These suspects we are parading here were arrested in connection with the last Saturday’s attacks in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State. The suspects are in two categories: three of the suspects, Yahuza, Friday and Ahmed, were in connection with the attacks in Barkin Ladi. The other 14 suspects were arrested from the scene of protest and blockage of federal highways to protest the attacks in Barkin Ladi.

“It was in the course of repelling the attackers by our men that these three suspects were arrested. When they saw our men coming after them, they threw away their guns and ran into the bush. But our men went after them and threatened to shoot them if they did not surrender, that was how the three of them were arrested.

“There was a civil disturbance that followed on June 24, 2018, around Maraba Jamaa, Angludi and Bukuru. Our men also stormed there to clear the roadblocks mounted by the protesters and these suspects participating in the civil disturbances were also arrested.”

When asked whether the three suspects had confessed to the crime, Umar said it had not reached that level.

“No, we have not got to that level; the investigation is still on. This is a security matter. They are already giving us useful information that may lead us to arrest more suspects linked to the attacks.”

When asked whether the 17 suspects were Nigerians or foreigners, Umar said those arrested at the scene of attacks were Nigerians.

“The three suspects that were arrested at the scene of attacks are Nigerians, they are not foreigners. The arms we arrested them with are also locally-made guns including one AK-47 rifle. These suspects are not the only ones involved in the attacks. We are on the trail of others. We want to appeal to Nigerians to be patient and cooperative with us in our efforts to get the perpetrators of these killings,” Umar stated.

He also dispelled rumours that there were attacks during the curfew, saying the OPSH had been given more reinforcement from Abuja.